



75-FOOT RULE

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ISSUE

Describe the so-called "75-foot rule" and its exceptions. Does it authorize any nonpartisan group, or parent-teacher groups only, to fundraise at a school being used as a polling place?

The "75-foot rule" generally prohibits anyone from soliciting support for or opposition to a candidate or a ballot question within a 75-foot radius of the outside entrance to a polling place, in a hallway or other approach leading from the entrance, or in a room opening upon any such hallway or approach. Polling place officials must post signs defining the restricted area. A person who violates the 75-foot rule commits a class C misdemeanor, punishable by up to three months in prison, up to a \$500 fine, or both.

The prohibition applies on the day of any primary, referendum, or election and includes loitering, peddling, and offering advertising material, ballots, or circulars. However, the law creates certain exceptions to it and allows:

1. registrars of voters to direct poll workers to distribute "I Voted Today" stickers in the restricted area;
2. the news media to enter and leave the polling place to observe the election;
3. small groups of supervised students in grades 4 to 12 to observe the election between noon and 3 p.m.;
4. supervised students to use a spare voting machine or ballot box inside a polling place or adjacent room for educational purposes, with the town legislative body's approval;
5. children age 15 or younger to accompany their parents or legal guardians into the polling place;

6. parent-teacher groups to hold bake sales or other fundraising activities at a school used as a polling place, provided the sale or activity is not held in the room where the voting booths are located; and
7. nonpartisan activities that the registrars jointly approve to be conducted in a room other than the one where the election booths are located (CGS §§ [9-236](#) and [-236a](#)).

According to the Secretary of the State's Office, fundraising by nonpartisan organizations other than parent-teacher groups may be permitted under the exception for nonpartisan activities jointly approved by the registrars of voters. The law does not define "nonpartisan activity." It gives the registrars discretion to decide what activities, if any, to allow. In practice, they have authorized activities such as Girl Scout cookie sales and Little League sign up.

KS:cmg